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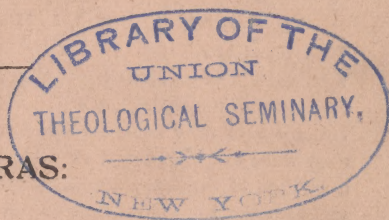
AN EASY

Arya-Tatva Catechism

BY

ALKONDAVILLI GOVINDACHARYA, C. E., F. T. S.

*Author of (English) Bhagavad-Gita, with
Sri Ramanuja's Commentaries, the Divine Wisdom of
Saints (English), the Lives of Saints (English) &
Editor of the "Visishtadvaitin," etc. etc.,
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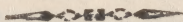
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PREFACE.

IT is a standing cry that Hinduism is a medley of beliefs and doctrines, an amorphous mass of speculation and practice, from which nothing clear and definite can be extracted and formulated. This indictment, if true, equally lies at the door of every other 'ism' in the world, Christism, Buddhism, and Mahomedism. If out of the amorphous mass of these 'isms' it is possible to formulate a certain system of beliefs and doctrines, that task is easier with regard to Hinduism. Hinduism is not at all a suitable term. It is a term which has been invented by foreigners. The suitable term for our religion is Vyasisism, *i.e.*, Vedism. And this Vedism has clear features such as the Dvaita, the Advaita, and the Visishtadvaita ; and thus not quite such a confusion after all as may be found in a mass of Buddhistic *Suttas*, Mahomedistic *Suras*, or Christic *Testaments* and *Apocrypha*. In this clear triune aspect of Vedism, a maximum of common ground is visible, which we disclose by means of this Aryan Catechism. The whole Vedic world can subscribe to it inasmuch as it steers clear of all the Scyllas and Charybdises of polemical points, and sails past the Maelstromes of sectarian creeds.

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DEDICATED TO

MY LATE HOLY FATHER

A SRINIVASA IYENGAR,

FROM WHOM I DERIVE

ALL MY

INSPIRATION.

Buddhism after all as may be found in a mass of confused and contradictory statements. In this clear trine aspect of Vedism, a maximum of common ground is visible, which we disclose by means of this Aryan Catechism. The whole Vedic world can subscribe to it inasmuch as it steers clear of all the Scyllas and Charybdises of polemical points, and sails past the Maelstroms of sectarian creeds.

The Arya Catechism.

Invocatory Verse.

Bow we to him, the Supreme Soul,
Whose sov'reign glory is His Grace;
May we 'loft borne, reach that sweet Goal,
And e'er dwell on His loving face.

CHAPTER I.

The End* of Man.

1. *Question.*—What are the aspirations of man constituting the purpose of life?

Answer.—They are grouped under *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kama* and *Moksha*. *Dharma* is the doing of good works sanctioned by Scripture, for the attainment of material prosperity in this as well as in other worlds; *Artha* is the acquiring of wealth; *Kama* is the satisfying of one's carnal desires; and *Moksha* is the attaining of eternal bliss.

2. *But, of the four above named, which purpose ought to be chiefly aimed at by man?*

Eternal bliss (*Moksha*).

* Purushartha.

3. *What is Moksha ?*

It is the attainment of ineffable joy or supreme felicity unalloyed with any trace of woe ; in other words, it is a state of immeasurable and unending Bliss attained by realising God and ever dwelling with Him and sharing with Him all Divine joy.

4. *What is woe or sin ?*

Woe or sin consists in the rotation of birth, decrepitude, death, etc., entailed by an endless chain of soul's acts.*

5. *How is this enviable state to be attained ?*

By devout meditation on God.

CHAPTER III

Nature of Soul.

6. *What is Soul ?*

Briefly stated, it is spirit which is essentially characterized by consciousness† and bliss.

7. *How many kinds of souls are there ?*

Two—the Individual Soul and the Universal Soul, or, the *Jivatman* and the *Paramatman*.

8. *What is Jivatman ?*

The spirit or soul which is different from the body, the senses, life, mind, etc., and which con-

* Acts = Karma.

† Consciousness = Chit or Jnana.

stitutes the "I" or the object of subjective consciousness, or the self-conscious entity, or ego.

9. *How many kinds of bodies are there ?*

Two—the gross body and the subtle body.

10. *What is the gross body ?*

That which is composed of limbs, such as hands, feet, etc., and is a material object cognisable by the senses as 'this', etc.

11. *What is the subtle body ?*

That which is composed of the principles of the five senses or organs of knowledge; the principles of the five organs of action, the five-fold Prana (vegetative life *), the Manas (sensorium) and Buddhi (consciousness, intelligence)—a compound of seventeen principles in all. This is the subtle, elemental body.

12. *Which are the five senses of knowledge ?*

Sight, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching.

13. *Which are the five organs of action ?*

The voice, the hands, the feet, the organs of excretion and of generation.

14. *What is the five-fold Prana ? Name their respective functions.*

(1) *Prana* which is concerned with the circulation of blood in the heart ; (2) *Apana* which is

* That which keeps the bodily machine going without reference to the intelligent principle.

concerned with the expulsion of waste products from the body ; (3) *Vyana* which is concerned with the multifarious functional duties connected with the details of the body ; (4) *Udana* which concerns itself with the respiratory and vocal organs ; (5) *Samana* which performs the functions of digestion, secretion of bile, &c., in the navel regions.

15. *What is Mānas ?*

It is the *sense-commune*, or the sensorium ; or the inner sense by and through which Intelligence or consciousness of the soul acts.

16. *What is Buddhi ?*

It is the essential attribute of the soul, *viz.*, consciousness (*vide* para. 7), by which the soul cognises things.

17. *Is ' Jivatman one or many ?*

Jivatmas are individual souls and therefore they are many, and severally dwell in as many specifically organized bodies.

18. *How is this union of Individual Soul and Body brought about ?*

By Karma or acts performed by the Soul (*vide* para. 4).

19. *How many kinds of acts are there ?*

Two—acts of virtue (merit) and acts of vice (demerit or sin).

20. *What is the heritage of the soul?*

Immortality and Purity (or Holiness—see 33, 34 & 39, *Infra*).

CHAPTER III.

Cause of material conditions.

21. *How does such holy soul get entangled in bondage with all the consequent misery?*

The bondage is the result of diverse acts, good and bad, performed by the free-willed soul.

22. *When did this bondage come about?*

No time can be stated.

23. *Is bondage a natural circumstance afflicting the soul?*

No. It is adventitious.

24. *Why then is it said to have no beginning?*

Because we are unable to fix the time.

25. *What is the cause of bondage?*

Avidya—nescience or ignorance.

26. *What is Avidya?*

It is two-fold—'Misapprehension' and 'Reversed Apprehension'. According to *Vishnu-Purana*, 'Misapprehension' is the mistaking of the body for

the soul, while 'Reversed Apprehension' is the notion of property or possession imposed upon things which are not really so.

These two notions combined constitute the seed of the tree of material or cosmic existence, or what is called bondage.

27. *How does the two-fold Avidya arise ?*

The soul has consciousness with a God-given Free-will to choose things good and evil. The exercise of this Free-will gives birth to varied acts which, according to their merits or demerits, contribute to the rise or the fall of the soul in the scale of evolution.

28. *What is meant by " Fall of the soul " ?*

The obscuration of its native characteristics. The soul is known by its consciousness, which gets dimmed or obscured, and this necessitates association with *Achit*.

29. *What is Achit ?*

It is the primordial material stuff characterized by non-consciousness or non-intelligence.

30. *What is the condition of the soul when associated with such primordial matter or Achit ?*

It is like minute particles of gold imbedded in a mass of wax with all its intelligence suppressed. It then seems to be almost identical with *Achit*.

CHAPTER IV.

Means of Release.**3. *What happens then ?***

The Supreme Soul, our God of Grace, takes compassion on the soul thus entangled and, out of His infinite mercy, endows it with an organised body with powers enabling it thus to manifest or evolve, until deliverance or freedom from material life is effected and eternal spiritual life attained. God's works of creation are designed to effect this end. In the ordinary process of evolution there comes a time when God makes the soul to take the upward arc by destroying its aversion to, and promoting its love for, Him. The soul now steadily walks in some one path of virtue, and ultimately reaps everlasting heavenly bliss. God is thus neither partial nor merciless.

32. *Can soul exist bereft of body ?*

No material medium is necessary for the display of its intelligence. Being spiritually pure, it can shine by itself. The soul can know itself without the instrument of a body or other such environment. Hence soul is formless.

33. *Has soul any gender ?*

It is neither masculine, nor feminine, nor neuter.

34. *What, then are the meanings of such terms as He, She and It, as applied to the soul ?*

These terms of specific gender are attributable to the several adventitious bodies having such genders ; not to the souls indwelling them.

CHAPTER V.

Nature of God.

35. *What is God ?*

He is all-knowing, all-powerful, all-merciful and the Author of all creation. He is the Beginning, the Middle and the End of all things.

36. *Where is God ?*

Space-like, He is everywhere.

37. *Are there evidences of His existence ?*

The *Vedas* or the Eternal Word of God ; the *Smritis* written by sages like Manu, to make clear the abstruse meanings of the *Vedas* ; the *Itihasas* or the record of God's doings in his aspects of Avatars ; the *Puranas* or the records of ancient events illustrating the truths of the *Vedas* and *Smritis* ;—these are the evidences. Inference or the science of induction and deduction which serves to establish links between causes and effects, also confirms His existence.

38. *How is the existence of God established by inference?*

It is evident that the whole universe is the result of a wonderfully worked out design, which means that there ought to be a Designer who has thought it all out. As the design is one uniform whole with all its parts harmoniously combined and correlated to each other, there can be but one single Designer or Author. From space downwards, all the manifested universe is derived from one intelligent Author as we have a number of pots from a single potter. Thus all creation has but one Creator. There are some amongst us who allege that matter is the cause of the universe. But it is evident that pots cannot make themselves, and so matter cannot evolve itself into this universe of diversified forms; for it is destitute of intelligence. It requires an intelligent, conscious Being to mould, shape, and operate by, in and on matter. But if it is alleged that such intelligence is inherent in matter, it is tantamount to acquiescence in a Conscious Principle abiding in matter. Then God is the name we give to this Conscious Intelligent Principle which is animating and pulsating in every point of space. Matter *per se* is non-intelligent and therefore cannot be said to rule. God is God by virtue of His ruling power. Matter, therefore, is not God. The existence of matter in the form of the visible

universe thus leads to the inference that there is a God who has made it so.

39. *Is God one or many?*

This question has been already answered. God is only one having no equal or superior. If there were many Gods equal to each other, the universe cannot hold together as a consistent whole; and, if there are many Gods unequal to each other, then there must be a superior to whom others must be inferior. This superior is God and He is One and One only.

40. *Does God ever make Himself visible?*

Certainly yes, and often; He chooses to become incarnate as Rama, Krishna, &c., and visible inwardly to devotees in their hearts in a variety of ways.

CHAPTER VI.

Meditation.

41. *Who is to be meditated upon and for whom is Moksha (or salvation)?*

God is to be meditated upon and the soul is to obtain Moksha from God.

42. *Pray explain meditation?*

It consists in first learning to understand the Nature of God, His Attributes, His Beatific Person, and His Wonderful Works. After gaining a know-

ledge of these, the devotee should muse over them with love. In other words, meditation is a state of mind where the devotee loves God and pants for His Presence. *Srimad-Bhagavata* details the several acts by which such mental attitude can be eternalized. They are hearing (*Sravaṇa*), reflection (*Manana*), praising (*Kirtana*), remembrance (*Smarana*), service at His Holy Feet (*Padasevana*), worship (*Archana*), adoration (*Vandana*), feeling low and humble in His presence (*Dasya*), loving (*Sakhya*) and dedication of one's soul to His care (*Atmanivedana*).

43. *What is Sravana ?*

It is the act of reverently listening to the spiritual preceptor expounding the nature of God and His attributes, &c.

44. *What is Manana ?*

It means reflection. It consists in weighing in one's mind of what has been heard.

45. *What is Kirtana ?*

It is the uttering of the Holy Names of God and praising Him by word of mouth, with music or otherwise.

46. *What is Smarana ?*

Recollecting over and over again of what has been reflected upon, so as to retain the same in thought permanently.

47. *What is Padasevana ?*

Throwing oneself down before the visible image of God, worshipping His Holy Feet with flowers and doing every kind of loving service.

48. *What is Vandana ?*

It is the thanksgiving or grateful disposition of the mind of the devotee.

49. *What is Dasya ?*

The belief and firm faith that the soul is essentially liege to the sovereign Lord.

50. *What is Sakhya ?*

The feeling of love or friendliness for God ; to feel that the soul has no other real friend than God.

51. *What is Atmanivedana ?*

The entire resignation of self, and all that it claims as its own, to God ; the unconditional surrender to God of all that is composed of 'I' and 'Mine'.

CHAPTER VII.

The Holy Vedas.

52. *What do you mean by the Vedas ?*

These are the commandments of God. They are eternal with Him. They form a treasury of Holy Words knit together in a certain succession. They are divisible into three portions—Mantra, Brahmana and Aranyaka.

53. *Into how many groups are the Vedas classified?*

They are classified into four groups,—*Rik*, *Yajus*, *Sama* and *Atharva*.

54. *What is Mantra?*

It is a set, holy formula, the repetition of which with a concentrated mind is called *Japa*. It is effective in producing required results. It is also used in performing *Homa* or acts of libation to God through the sacred fire. It is sometimes in the form of *Stuti* or hymn addressed to God, and used in *Aradhana* or ceremonial act of worship.

55. *What is Brahmana?*

That portion of the Vedas which is, as it were, a commentary on, and explaining the meaning and the use of, the *Mantra*.

56. *What is Aranyaka?*

The *Brahmana* and the *Mantra* constituting the ritualistic portion of Vedism, the *Aranyaka* constitutes the speculative (or philosophical) and contemplative portion of Vedism. The *Upanishads* belong to this portion and are called the *Vedanta*. The whole constitute the *Vedas*.

57. *What is the chief import of the Vedas?*

The inquiry into the import of the anterior division of the Vedas is called *Purva-Mimamsa*. It teaches the *methods* of worship. The posterior division, called *Uttara Mimamsa*, is the inquiry into the *object* of worship, God.

The first *Mimamsa*, settles finally all disputed points in the Mantra and Brahmana which are concerned with the *Means* or *Methods* of worshipping God, and the second *Mimamsa* settles finally all disputed points in the Aranyaka portion which is concerned with the *Goal* or *object* of such worship.

58. *What is Dharma ?*

Dharma consists of the ways and means by which to secure happiness here and hereafter. Our Sastras prescribe certain things being done and prohibit certain things being done. The mandatory portion treats of private, and public morals, or duty to self, to society and to God ; thus : respect and veneration to parents, devotion to spiritual preceptor, adoration and worship of God, hospitality, holy reading, the company of the good and holy ; hearing their exposition of Scriptures, gratitude, charity, non-injury, compassion, forgiveness, &c., in short, to abide by all sacred Laws. Their opposites constitute the prohibitory portion of the Vedas. *Dharma* means religion or righteousness, and therefore all laws conducive to the well-being of the soul. The Vedas inculcate these laws.

59. *What is auxiliary to Dharma ?*

Holy Duty (*Ach ara*) ?

60. *What is Holy Duty ?*

The general and special acts of a person based upon the ancient and holy Laws. Mostly it consists of external and internal acts of purity. Acts of cleanliness come under this head. They

are hygienic as well and conducive to the purification of the mind through the body. *Achāra* therefore is an essential element for spiritual progress. Without it, no amount of Vedic erudition can by itself help to save a soul, just as a bird cannot fly with only one wing. Purity, both physical and mental, is the rule of life ordained by our Scriptures. There is Word of God to the effect that none can be saved without purity. He who neglects purity and thus breaks the first and foremost religious rule is an offender in the eyes of God, while he who acts up to it is deserving of His Grace. The *Acharas* suitable for different *Varnas* and *Asramas* are treated of in the *Dharma Sastras*. *Vedas* are the source and inspiration of all *Dharma-Sastras* which are their expositions in later *Samskrit* style.

CHAPTER VIII.

Creation (or Evolution).

61. *What is creation ?*

It is the manifestation of the subtle primordial matter, which is formless and nameless, into diversity of gross forms bearing names and forms ; it consists also in endowing souls with definite bodies and organs according to past Karma. (*vide* paras 29 and 30).

62. *How many kinds of creation are mentioned in the Sastras ?*

Two kinds, i.e., *Vyashti* or special, and *Samashti* or general, creation.

63. *Describe the Vyashti-creation.*

It is effected through a first-born Demiurge namely, the four-faced Brahma, who is made a Lord of one system of worlds called a *Brahmanda*, all creation within it being entrusted to his management, care and authority.

64. *Describe the Samashti-creation ?*

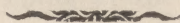
It is direct creation by God, which consists in the evolution of the original homogeneous material stuff into 24 categories of *Mahat*, *Ahankara*, the five *Tanmatras* or radical elements, the five gross elements, the five organs of perception, the five of action, and *Manas*.

65. *What is Pralaya or destruction ?*

It is the disintegration and decomposition of organic things into their original subtle conditions.

66. *Why does destruction follow creation ?*

To give rest to things for a time before a fresh period of activity is to begin ;—like day and night alternating. [See para 31, for *purpose* of creation].



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